

LIVE PERFORMANCE PHOTOGRAPHY

by

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It is this feeling of capturing a single,
never-to-be-repeated moment of time in a
photograph that makes these pictures
very different from those that are
posed and therefore able to be
reconstructed when necessary"

-Paddy Cutts and Rosemary Curr-

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Live performance photography

1. Introduction

Although performance as a medium of artistic expression only became accepted in the 1970's, many different ideological and theoretical opinions on art did exist in the past. Specific ideas on art were usually linked to a specific era. Eventually, each era's ideas - and specifically its innovations - had an influence on other artistic developments.

2. History of performance art

The origin of the theatre can be traced far back into the past to the religious ceremonies of ancient man. Throughout the history of man traces of dancing and singing to the glory of a god (for example Dionusos, the god of theatre) can be found. These rituals were performed by priests and worshippers clad in animal skins. Examples of such ritualistic behaviour include the portrayal of the birth of Christ, His death and resurrection. Even in today's educated society ceremonies similar to those practised in primitive society can be found.

2.1 The Greek theatre

It appears therefor that the first theatrical period in the history of the Western society also served as the origin of modern theatre. The first period's origins can be traced back to Ancient Greece in 6 B.C. It was here that tragedies and comedies, some of which still exist, were performed by actors, not priests. These performances were staged in

special buildings or enclosed spaces which, although proclaimed holy, were not temples. The Greeks were therefore the first people who considered drama as a form of entertainment (Salt, 1969, p.460).

It seems thus that the portrayal of theatre did not emerge out of some necessity, but originated mainly as a common, daily documentation of events.

According to Kennis-uitgewers (1973, Boekdeel 12, p.2303) producers were no longer allowed to criticize the authorities, and therefore had to make use of other forms of drama, especially concentrating on excerpts from daily life. New comedy can be considered the forerunner of modern theatre where the portrayal of character is the most important issue.

2.2 Roman theatre

Not only did the Romans copy the building style of the Greek amphitheaters, but also the written theatre pieces.

The Romans' attitude towards drama, however, differed greatly from that of the Greeks in that they did not place the emphasis on the spectacularity of the performances, but rather on the performance itself.

2.3 Indian, Chinese and Japanese theatre

By 580 B.C. the Chinese plays depicted legends and fiction with a combination of dialogue, song, dance and acrobatic stunts.

Seeing that there was no decor, symbols once again represented reality. For example: a folded red mantle symbolized a body while black flags symbolized storm winds and a table for example symbolized a bridge.

In Japan, other than puppet performances, two other forms of theatre could be found: the No'h (the more aristocratic type) and the Kabuki (a later form of theatre). The No'h which originated around 1200 was performed by two actors (one masked). Both forms of theatre employed singers and dancers and portrayed mythology and legends.

2.4 The Medieval theatre

During the Dark Ages life was very precarious and most people, even in higher society, were illiterate. During this period theatre underwent many changes. Posters for the advertising of entertainment (which was found in the Roman Empire) changed in shape and was rather used as heraldry. The depiction of reality took on other forms by 1340 such as the use of manuscripts and mosaic works.

The development of the theatre was slow, seeing that the intensity of religious belief was no longer the same as before. With Latin as the communal language, spiritual plays were the most important criteria for the great illiterate population because most scenes represented extracts from the Bible.

Theatre in the Middle Age became more and more complicated with the introduction of dramatic scenes and costumes. Plays and texts improved in quality too.

2.5 Theatre during the Italian Renaissance

Spiritual plays reached their peak of development in the Middle Ages around the 14th century. The 15th century on the other hand marked the deterioration of such plays under the influence of the Renaissance. This great cultural change started with the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. As a result theatre, as well as all other forms of art, underwent a metamorphoses. Plays and dramas were rather used for propaganda purposes than theatrical ends. (Clement, 1985, p.758)

An Italian called Monteverdi was the first to implement the idea of opera. This was done by using a simple play, based on a mythological or legendary subject, where words were no longer important. Music became the most important aspect thereof and so a new art form, opera, was born.

Italy therefore definitely earns the reputation as the cradle of the modern theatre, opera and ballet. This contribution was unavoidably important in the development of theatre.

2.6 English, Spanish and French theatre

Indio Jones can be regarded as a pioneer of the English theatre. His designs (in the early 17th century; more specifically 1605 to 1613) for decor and costumes were complex and unsuitable for public theatre in those times. For the first time in English stage drama footlights were used.

Although the development of English and Spanish theatre happened simultaneously, it seems that there were very little contact between them.

The French differed from the English dramatists who mixed comedy and tragedy in their plays, and observed a definite distinction between the two forms of drama.

The new theatre exhibited an interesting mixture of English and Continental influences. One of the most prominent consequences thereof was the casting of female actors in female roles.

A major change in English theatre became obvious by 1730, with the shift of the orchestra to the front of the audience. There was also a change from comedy and tragedy to sentiment and pathos. David Garrick was the first to use a form of hidden lightning.

2.7 The 18th century theatre in Germany

This era started with the changing of costumes. The most well-known character in the theatre was the clown. This was a result of the influence of touring English companies on the German art companies.

At the start of the 18th century, comedies were prohibited. It was substituted by work with a more serious character. Another consequently characteristic of the 18th century theatre was the separation of the audience from the stage in 1759.

2.8 Early 19th century theatre

The minimum theatrical experiments were carried out during the early 19th century in Europe. However, some major transformations did occur, such as the re-introduction of comedy-like performances. Another initiative was the performance of melodramas – with living animals like dogs, elephants and horses.

2.9 Later 19th century theatre

From 1830 to 1880 the theatre expanded rapidly. Theatre buildings were enlarged, audiences expanded and more job opportunities were created in the theatre.

A very important form of visual portrayal emerged: photography. Towards the end of the 19th century photography became the sole medium for advertising the theatre.

Two other forms of art appeared in the late 19th century: (i) Music hall and (ii) Musical. The former included for example sentimental aspects of the past and the present. The Music hall resulted in the creation of the movie theatre and (after World War 2) in television. The Musical was a lighter form of entertainment. It contained elements of the

burlesque, operetta and revue. The first Musical was performed in 1878.

The 19th century also marked the birth of cabaret. Cabaret was born in 1881 in the Chat Noir Café in Paris.

2.10 Futurism

Futurism history began on 20 February 1907 in Paris, involving the publication of the first manifesto in the large-circulation daily, *Le Figaro*. Its author, Filippo Tomasso Marinetti, attacked the Parisian public on their establishment values of painting (Goldberg, 1988. p 11).

Marinetti presented his own play, *Roi Bombance*. It was based on an earlier production of Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Roi*. After only two performances of *Ubu Roi*, the theatre de l'Œuvre had become famous. *Roi Bombance* was presented at the same theatre. Crowds stormed the theatre to see how the self-proclaimed Futurist author put into practice the ideals expressed in his manifesto (Goldberg, 1988, p.13).

In Italy Marinetti recognized the possibilities of utilizing the public unrest for reform in the arts.

The Futurist saw the interest of painters such as Umberto, Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo and Gino Severini with the publication of the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* in 1910.

Based on their joined manifesto, they declared:" The gesture for us will no longer be *fixed moment* of universal dynamism: it will be decisively the *dynamic sensation* made eternal (Goldberg, 1988, p.14). The Futurist painters turned to

performance as the most direct means of forcing an audience to take note of their ideas.

Performance was the surest means of disrupting a complacent public. It gave artists a licence to be both "creators" in developing a new form of artist theatre, and "art objects" in that they made no separation between their art as poets, as painters or as performers.

Manifestos by Pratella on Futuristic music had appeared in 1910 and 1911. Manifestos on Futurist playwrights appeared in January 1911. The manifestos encouraged artist to present more elaborate performances. In turn, experiments in performance led to more detailed manifestos. Another manifesto, the *Dynamic Synoptic Declaration*, appeared in 1914. Basically it instructed potential performers how to perform e.g. "... as much with his legs as with his arms." (Goldberg, 1988, p.18) The latter manifesto referred to music and ballet as well as the synthetic theatre. Futurist theories and presentations covered almost every area of performance.

By the mid-twenties the Futurists had fully established performance as an art medium.

Futurism attacked all possible outlets of art. It applied its genius to the technological innovations of the time.

2.11 Russian Futurism Constructivism

Manifestos similar to those in Italy appeared in Russia in 1912 by painters Barlyuk, Mayakovsky etc. According to Russian Futurist " art is not only a monarch, but also a newsmen and a decorator" (Goldberg, 1988, p.33.) Here again the Futuristic idea included music as well as theatre. The

effect of Futurism was seen as transitional for it had succeeded in suggesting a new direction. Futurist ideas were applied to music, dance, films, circus and drama.

Each year saw innovations in art, architecture and theatre. Artists constantly moved from one workshop to another. New groups (e.g. Blue Blouse Group) were formed. Theatre had been drawn into art production as much as art production had formed theatre.

It was in 1934 that Zhdanov (the party spokesman for matters concerning art) delivered the first definitive statement on socialistic realism, outlining an official and enforceable code for cultural activity. This speech dramatically marked a turning-point in theatre artists' performance. It put a stop to almost thirty years of extraordinary productions.

2.12 Dada

Long before Dada was officially established, various types of popular night-life entertainment existed in German cities. The most important artists were Wedekind in Munich, Kokoschka in Vienna and Hugo Ball and Emmy Henning's in Zurich. Wedekind's provocative productions were very controversial e.g. *Pandara's Box* from 1904. Wedekind's performances revelled in the licence given to the artist to be a mad outsider, exempt from society's normal behaviour. Like Wedekind, Kokoschka was considered something of an eccentric affronting the public morals and to the taste of the conservative.

Hugo Ball + Henning's were responsible for the establishment of Cabaret Voltaire on 5 February 1916. Cabaret Voltaire

was a centre for artistic entertainment with daily performances, the main event being Emmy Henning's cabaret.

On 14 July 1916 a new phase began when Dada went public at the Waag Hall in Zurich. Gradually the nature of the work changed from spontaneous performances to a more organized, didactic programme. Unlike the first improvised events, press releases were now distributed extensively, and co-signers were solicited for new manifestos. Elaborate introductions were prepared to familiarize the public with Dada ideas. For three years Dada was at the height of its notoriety and people flocked to performances to experience Dada at first hand. However, in 1919 Tristan Tzara (the head of Dada for the last years) could not coerce the public into further participation (Goldberg, 1988. p.74)

2.13 Surrealism

The year 1925 marked the official foundation of the Surrealistic movement - Surrealism being described as "rested on the belief in the higher reality of certain hitherto neglected forms of association in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought" (Goldberg, 1988, p.89)

From 1928 to 1938 Surrealism displayed its possibilities to dominate political, artistic and philosophical life. However, the Second World War was to put a stop to further group activities.

2.14 Bauhaus

The Bauhaus was a teaching institution for the arts. With a very different approach, it opened its doors in 1919. In its manifesto it called for the unification of all the arts – unlike the rebellious Futurist or Dada provocators.

Bauhaus festivities (which drew people from local communities as well as from surrounding cities) provided the artists with the opportunity to experiment with new performance ideas. New ideas were constantly generated – one of them being the concept of performance space.

Mechanical ballet, triadic ballet, painting and performances were under the influence of the Bauhaus idea.

Metal dance (1929) is another example (Goldberg, 1988. p.106).

The Bauhaus as institution was finally closed down in 1932.

2.15 Living art from 1933 to the 1970's

Performance in the United States began to emerge in the late thirties with the arrival of European war exiles in New York.

A small institution, the Black Mountain College in North Carolina, saw the awakening of performance art in the United States of America. Despite the lack of an explicit manifesto or a public declaration of its intentions, the Black Mountain College succeeded in presenting improvised performances.

In 1936, influenced by Bauhaus, art focussed on the visual interplay of light and geometric forms. Performance became

a means of attaining reconciliation between members of various art faculties.

In 1939 music and dance became experimental. Musical composition tended to exhibit the dissimilarity of interpretation. By 1948 dancers and musicians had been collaborating on several projects.

During the fifties performance theory was characterized by a similarity of art to life - art should not be regarded as something apart from life but as an intrinsic part of life. Therefor all aspects of life, including accidents, the chances taken, the variety, disorder and momentary beauty experienced by man should be portrayed by man. Preparation for performances was minimal - resulting in total improvisation.

In the sixties art and especially performance art, were characterized by attempts to expose the public to the unreasonable demands of life in chaos - confronting them with the most absurd and repugnant scenes (for example horror) to awaken their consciousness. Some of the productions attempted to examine the political, social and spiritual polarities that characterized existence.

2.16 The art of ideas from 1968

The year 1968 marked the beginning of the decade of the seventies. In that year political events severely unsettled social and cultural life throughout Europe and the United States. The mood was one of irritation and anger with prevailing structures and values.

Performance in the last two years of the sixties and of the early seventies reflected conceptual art's rejection of

traditional materials. Performers turned to their own bodies as material for art - some artists were using their bodies as objects manipulating them as they would a piece of sculpture, others developed more structured performances which explored the body as an element in space. In contrast to performances which dealt with formal properties of the body in space and time, others were far more emotive and expressionistic in nature. Autobiographical performances followed where artists revealed intimate information about themselves in order to establish a particular feeling of empathy between performer and audience.

Performance artist drew on all aspects of entertainment for the structure of their works. Some turned to cabaret and variety theatre techniques as a means to convey their ideas. Punk rock, which was invented around 1975, suggested an outlet - free from any form of dependance on establishment recognition. The mood of many of this type of music was disruptive and cynical. In many ways it echoed some Futurist performances.

While performances were usually one-off, brief events, minimally rehearsed and lasting from about ten to fifty minutes, the ambitious work of some artists (for example Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman) went through several months of rehearsal, ran for at least two hours, and had repeat performances over several months. Text began to have a significant part in productions.

By 1979 the anti-establishment idealism of the sixties and the early seventies had been categorically rejected. A quite different mood of pragmatism, professionalism and

entrepreneurship began to make itself apparent. New works showed attention to decor, costumes, set and lightning. The eighties also marked the removal of barriers between art and the media. Television became more and more involved in the broadcasting of artistic events. The division between traditional theatre and performance became blurred.

3. Theatre photography

Although the history of photography was prescribed to technical development as well as the presence of an aesthetic form of art, the birth thereof can be regarded (generally speaking) as the result of a contribution of both aspects.

The first types of theatre photographs were to be taken on Calotypes. Between the work of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson a number of Calotypes have been found of friends clad in costumes from scenes out of Sir Walter Scott's books. These photographs are proof of choice of costumes, posing and models although lightning and techniques were the same. These *Tableaux Vivants* (amateur theatre productions) can certainly be regarded as the roots of theatre photography.

During the time of the Civil War in America, Charles De Forest Fredericks was the most successful and well-known theatre photographer in New York. Personalities performing in Manhattan or Brooklyn all posed in costumes (or without) for Fredericks' *catre-de-visites* in his studio in Broadway 581 - against his unchanged background and furniture.

Only after the 1890's did the first photographs appear which were taken of the interiors of theatres.

Watkins Herbert was the first person to take a photograph on stage during a production - that of Charles Kean in *Richard III*.

At the turn of the 19th century most of London's West End productions by Foulsham and Banfield were photographed, using the new magnesium process.

Alfred Valente attempted sporadically to improve the average theatre photograph, but failed. A few photographers, including Charlotte Fairchild, introduced the stage beauties in modern outfits to the public. Alfred Cheney Johnstone photographed theatre personalities against folded linen, while also using soft focus.

Pictorialism as it existed in the 19th century, originated from High Art photography of the 1850's. It was also greatly influenced by paintings and drawings, as theatre had an effect on photography in that era.

Probably the strangest of pictorial photographers was Fred Holland Day from Boston. He caused a sensation by depicting himself as Jesus Christ in the Passion Play from the Bible. He performed that in 1898 in front of his camera.

In the work of other photographers during this period the influence of painting and theatre lighting is obvious. In a Gum-biochromate taken in 1902, entitled "Rodin and the Thinker" this influence can definitely be seen in Edward J. Steichen's work. Steichen's work improved and he also managed in capturing his subject's character through dramatic lighting.

Baron Adolphe de Meyer also started as a pictorialist who later changed his style. His later work included many portrait studies of theatre personalities and more specifically ballet personalities, as well as portrait studies and stage action.

Cecil Beaton was another photographer famous for both his portrait studies and fashion images. He too had a great love for theatre, which was reflected in the building of his backdrops and decor for photographic purposes.

4. Theatre photographers

4.1 Bob Martin

Bob Martin's portfolio consists of a majority of black and white prints. He uses available light. The atmosphere of specific scenes is captured successfully in his photographs. He also succeeds in presenting images which display almost perfect resemblance to the original idea of the producers and the lightning technicians. The use of graphic design to illustrate composition is obvious. Designers concepts which are used are: (i) direct form and size and (ii) the use of perspective and viewpoint in scenes with more than one actor.

According to Martin, a theatre photographer needs the ability to concentrate for quite a long time. This will help the photographer to identify the right moment to take the photograph.

4.2 John Haynes

John Haynes is interested in taking "natural photographs".

His biggest goal still remains to reveal a performance in such a way that it resembles the way that an audience would have experienced it. To achieve this goal, he avoids posed and artificial photographs and thus does not attend photo-calls or press-calls.

He was inspired by Henri-Cartier Bresson and still has great respect for him. This respect is clear from his words: "I thought and still do, that his pictures are wonderful, so

natural and full of life" (The Photographer, February 1986, p.40).

Haynes' approach to theatre photography varies substantially. He usually attends the final dress rehearsal. Sometimes, if time allows it, he attends one or two earlier rehearsals in order to identify potential shots, as well as to get a good look at movements, composition and expressions. According to Haynes, photographing a show without attending a rehearsal demands instinctive reactions on the part of the photographer.

The sizes of objects or people in his photographs are very seldom reduced. Decor present in the photographs only enhance the images.

Almost the only point of criticism that can be directed to his work is the use of the same viewpoint. This causes his images to be monotonous.

4.3 Frazer Ashford

Frazer Ashford, a British theatre photographer, became interested in theatre photography only after one of his images was used on the cover of a music magazine.

His work can be divided into two categories: commercial and free-lance work for magazines and periodicals.

Almost all of Ashford's work is done in black and white - due to a personal grudge against color photography. He works solely on 35mm. His work shows a considerable degree of variation, including: photographs taken during rehearsals, group photographs of all the actors involved in a play taken at least three weeks prior to the opening,

publicity photographs, photographs for the program as well as photographs for the archive and for the actors themselves. This whole series of photographs for one production takes about three months to complete.

The use of a very near viewpoint - almost a wide-angle effect - is conspicuous in a number of his works.

5. Practical theatre photography

Theatre photography has its own rules and the photographer must be able to cope with its demands by being observant and by being capable of working quickly in low-light conditions. The photographer must bear in mind that different kinds of theatres demand different approaches. Also, all performing artists want the mood of the actual performance to be resembled in the photographs. This is especially true in the world of ballet.

Practical work done by a photographer also depends on the producer of a production: if the production is on a large scale, the photographs will have to include the whole of the stage; if it is a serious play, most photographs will be portraits or posed photographs.

Theatre photography thus has four dimensions that is: the whole stage, individual scenes, group photographs and portraits where photographs of

- 1) the whole stage shows the relationship between decor, actors and their movements;
- 2) individual scenes, group photographs and portraits must meet the demands of advertisement and archive purposes and must also give a general impression of the style of production.

6. Photographing live performances

6.1 The scenario

According to Hilde Zemann (International Photo Technik, 1976, p.8-10) the work of a theatre photographer, under ideal conditions, already starts a few weeks prior to the opening of the performance. The photographer should already have knowledge of the programme, read the text or the script and met the producer to get to know his ideas on the production. At this stage the photographer can already take a few photographs. The photographer should visit the auditorium before the performance to familiarize himself with the stage and lighting and to identify potential viewpoints. Thereafter rehearsals can be attended and the actual photographs must be taken during the final dress rehearsal or performance.

6.2 Getting permission

If a photographer had not been given an assignment, permission should be obtained before photographing begins. Whether or not permission will be granted to take photographs during a performance will depend on the particular company or artist that is to be photographed. Many artists (for example in Broadway) have contracts that require them to be paid for photography sessions. Thus the management are compelled to refuse the right to photograph the show to anyone except the professional photographer hired to handle publicity pictures (Encyclopedia of Practical Photography, 1979, p. 2421).

The same restrictions exist with many other professional artistic groups. This should not be a discouraging factor to the photographer. The photographer should speak to the

manager/producer and explain his position. Permission may be granted; however, a major company may not want an amateur photographer roaming the stage area or audience during a dress rehearsal. This is especially true if the rehearsal is being recorded by a professional photographer for publicity.

Most of the time both professional and amateur photographers are allowed to photograph shows only during dress rehearsals.

Negotiations to get permission to photograph a show, in the case of the author, had begun long before the opening of the show. It is essential to start early enough, for it may take a long time to get permission and to explain exactly why the photographs are needed.

7. Equipment

7.1 Camera and lenses

Live performances are nowadays almost solely recorded on 35mm cameras.

An adjustable camera with a relative wide range of lenses (from 28mm to 200mm) is necessary for recording live performances. The camera must be capable of using high-speed film. Cameras must have a sensitive exposure meter.

The choice of lenses used will depend on the viewpoint from where the photograph will be taken. The focal length (which relate to the position of the photograph in the auditorium) of the lens is as well as important as the lens opening (which determines depth of field) that is going to be used. The sizes of the stage and the auditorium are also factors to be considered in the choice of lenses. The lenses used must preferably be fast in order to ensure large apertures (The Focal Encyclopedia, 1969, p. 1532).

Lenses with long focal lengths are very suitable for a series of individual photographs of actors or groups especially from a point near the stage. Sometimes the only disadvantage of these long focal lenses is the restriction to a small aperture.

The sound level of the equipment used must be low. Many older single reflex cameras have mirrors that cause a relatively loud noise during exposure. This sound could disturb the performers. Nowadays many of the new 35mm single lens reflex cameras have special mechanisms to make

them exceptionally quiet. Twin lens reflex cameras and rangefinder cameras are also suitable since they do not have moving mirrors and are therefore quiet. If the noise of the equipment used will be disturbing, the photographer will definitely be restricted to dress rehearsals.

7.2 Films

For the greatest versatility in available-light situations a high-speed film must be used. The availability of high-speed films eliminates the need for a tripod. It gives the photographer the capability of taking hand-held pictures in available light.

Illumination in theatres is provided by different types of spotlights - each with its own color temperature. Sometimes lighting of different color temperatures are mixed, and sometimes color filters are used in front of the spotlights. It is thus almost impossible to determine the correct color temperature for color films (The Focal Encyclopedia, 1969, p. 1532). Each color film (both negative and slide film) is designed for use with a specific type of light. For the most pleasing color rendition the film must be exposed under the lighting conditions recommended by the manufacturer. If, for example, a film balanced for daylight illumination is exposed by tungsten lighting, the pictures will look warm or yellow-red. Under fluorescent illumination daylight film will appear greenish.

Color negative film can be uprated. However, it is recommended that such a film should be pushed only by one stop. When developed, the time of the first developer must be increased by 40 percent for each stop. In the case of transparencies (which can be uprated by as much as two or three stops) the time of the first developer must be

increased by one-third of the total development time for every stop pushed (Langford, 1986, p. 229).

Since black and white film does not record the color of the light, it can be used with any kind of lighting. The ASA number of some black and white film (eg HP5) can be uprated from 400 ASA to eg. 3200 ASA (Langford, 1989, p. 199). It must be processed accordingly. This allows either faster shutter speeds or larger aperture settings. Excessive grain tend to be present in the final prints when a film is uprated.

7.3 Camera supports

Three types of camera supports can be used: tripod, monopod and shoulder pod.

A tripod is ideal. It is very stable and allows photographs to be taken at long exposures. However, it is very inconvenient to walk around with when it is open.

If some weight is put on a monopod, it becomes almost as steady as a tripod. An important advantage is that it can be braced against a wall, chair or almost any other surface. It is also easily moveable.

A shoulder pod improves camera steadiness. If a sharp picture can be obtained by hand-holding a camera at 1/60 second, a shoulder pod will allow pictures to be taken at shutter speeds between 1/30 and 1/8 second.

7.4 Spot meters and -attachments

It is not always desirable to use an exposure meter or an automatic camera to determine exposure, for a lighted lamp included in the scene may mislead your reflected-light meter. The use of a spot meter will eliminate this problem. The advantage of a spot meter (with a field of view of one to five degrees) is that such a meter records a very narrow angle of view. The light falling on the face of individual performers can then be recorded using this type of meter even if the photographer is in the last row of the audience.

Spot attachments (varying between five and ten degrees) can also be used. Readings must be taken carefully because the attachment would probably read enough dark area to cause overexposure (as in the case of automatic readings).

7.4.1 Lighting and exposure

The electronic flash has lost its importance in theatre photography during the past few years. This is a result of the fact that the use of flash equipment is very seldomly allowed inside the theatre. The photographer must therefore take all the pictures in available light. A major disadvantage of not being able to use flash, is the presence of shadows on the face and especially under the eyebrow-ridge. The use of fill-in flash would illuminate faces more evenly. However, the mood of the scene is correctly rendered in available light.

Available-light photography has several advantages. Available-light pictures look realistic because the illumination in the scene has not been changed. This type of photography is less expensive. Without accessory

lighting equipment, it is more convenient and the photographer has greater freedom of movement. The performers will appreciate the available-light approach because they won't be disturbed by flashes from flashbulbs. The performers may not even notice that photographs are being taken, which will result in them having relaxed facial expressions

Illumination during performances very seldomly stays the same from scene to scene. It is difficult to judge the differences in the amount of light from one scene to another. It is thus impossible to use an average light reading since the intensity of the lighting varies considerably.

7.4.2 Photo-calls

Another way of taking theatrical photographs is by doing it during photo-calls. The major advantage of photo-calls is the photographer's ability to space the actors according to their relation to decor and props used. This will ensure the most pleasing viewpoint for the camera.

Lighting can also be controlled without losing the mood of the specific scene.

Great care must be taken in order to avoid unnatural, posed images

8. Personal work

To be able to present a satisfactory portrayal of a show, the theatre photographer must have knowledge of human emotions, disposition and motivation for action. The photographer must be able to transfer these elements to the public with the aid of his photographs. The photographer should thus strive to portray productions in a realistic and natural manner. The atmosphere of the original production must be retained in the photographs.

In order to portray productions in a natural and realistic manner, photographs had been taken solely during final dress rehearsals or actual performances. This causes the photographer to handle more instinctively - which avoids tediousness and lack of interest. All the photographs had been taken without prior knowledge of the text, lighting and movements of actors.

Since the author started specializing in theatre and live performances, a total of 13 shows have been documented. Productions which were presented at the Sand du Plessis Theatre, the Andre Huguenet Theatre, the Civic Theatre in Bloemfontein as well as during the 1992 Art Festival at Grahamstown, have been documented. The type of events recorded range between plays, an opera, live performances, dance events, musical events and a circus.

During performances photographs were taken instinctively. Due to the lack of sufficient time elements such as composition, viewpoints and special effects could not be planned beforehand. Hand-eye coordination is thus quite important.

8.1 Problems

Several problems have been experienced during the whole process of photographing live performances:

1) The major problem in photographing live performances is lighting. Lighting problems can be categorized in (i) lighting conditions and (ii) variation in color temperature.

The intensity of lightning is always either too low or too high. Sometimes the principal players are lit by spotlights and the rest of the stage with secondary lights. This causes problems in exposure if a part of the stage is also intended to be portrayed.

Very often lighting conditions are poor. In such low-light it is impossible to record any action on stage. This problem has been experienced for many years, for Cecil Beaton said in 1968: "As a stranger to the stage I found my greatest difficulty, both then and now, was in using the theatrical lightning equipment to my own advantage" (Beaton, 1968, p.1).

Variation in color temperature causes difficulty to use color negative and color slide film. Lights on stage (whether it be spot-, secondary- or footlights) all differ in intensity and color temperature. The use of color gels over some lights also causes difference in intensity and color temperature. Compensation for these difficulties can be achieved through using (i) color compensation filters or by (ii) compensation during the printing stage.

(2) Since the use of flash equipment is prohibited in photographing shows, available light was used. As a result of this another problem arose namely the presence of shadows under the eyebrow-ridge. This problem could be

eliminated with the aid of fill-in flash set for one to two stops underexposure.

(3) The lack of mobility was another disadvantage. Lack of mobility implies that the photographer is restricted to one viewpoint - mostly full-frontal. This causes repetition which is not always desirable. Restriction on movement was maintained strictly during live performances and to a somewhat lesser extent during dress rehearsals.

This also implied the lack of permission to take photographs from backstage.

(4) Prior to one specific performance, the author had to negotiate with the public relations officer of a specific group to be granted permission to document their show. The public relations officer approved the taking of photographs with some conditions - (i) that he would have the right to decide which pictures were to be used and which not and (ii) that he would have the authority to gain permanent possession of (or to destroy) the negatives of those photographs he decided will not be used.

The problem in this case lay in to convince the public relations officer on what ground the author wanted to use a specific frame. If the public relations officer decided that, according to him - apart from the photographer's intention or goal- it was not a good image, the photographer was not allowed to use that frame.

8.2 Recommendations

The author can, in view of his experience, recommend the following hints in general to potential theatre photographers:

Regarding persons:

- 1) The photographer must start negotiating with the particular artist or group of artists well in advance.
- 2) It is very important to maintain positive communication with the artist or his public relations officer as well as with the personnel of the theatre or venue.

Regarding equipment:

- 1) Use a fast film - it will enable the photographer to do exposure bracketing.
- 2) It is always very convenient to use at least two cameras during the recording of a show. It comes in handy when different types of films are used eg. black and white and color film, or even films with different ASA speeds.
- 3) The use of two or more cameras implies the use of different lens types. A zoom lens (eg. 35mm - 70mm or a 70mm - 210mm). These two different focal lengths of lenses should be sufficient.
- 4) The photographer should always take one or other form of camera support with him because the lighting situation sometimes demands stable support for longer shutter speeds.

9. Discussion of personal photographs

9.1 Untitled 1

This photograph of Claire Johnstone was taken during her performance in the Sand du Plessis Theatre in Bloemfontein. The photograph portrays Claire alone on the stage with spotlights focussed on her. She is in a sitting position, awaiting the chords of a song.

Exposure was determined by through-the-lens-metering - this photograph taken at 1/30th of a second at f8 with a 70-210mm lens. The frame was taken on an 400 ASA Agfa film uprated to 800 ASA. The development time was changed accordingly. In this case no camera support was used. The camera was stabilized by the author physically lying on the stage floor.

The only problem experienced with this photograph during the printing stage was to get some detail on the left side of Claire's face. This was achieved by burning in on the particular washed-out area. This area was exposed considerably longer than the rest of the photograph.

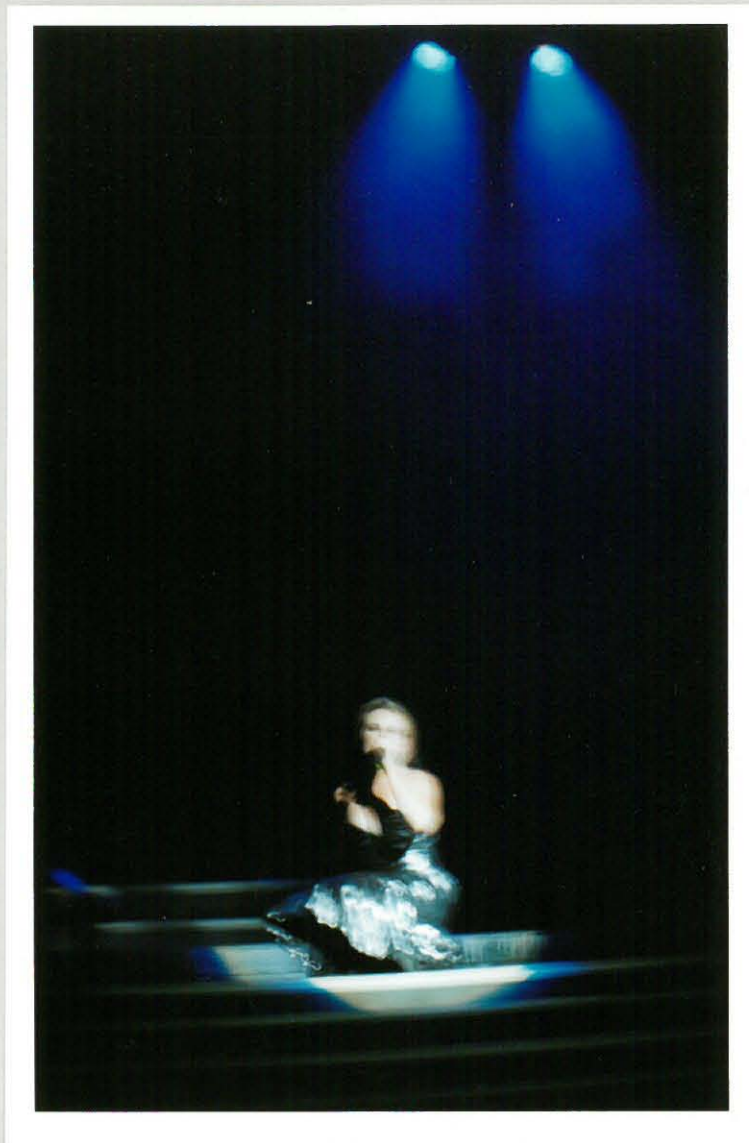


Figure 1
Untitled 1
1/30th second
f/8
400 ASA Agfa

9.2 Untitled 2

As the above-mentioned photograph, this photograph also portrays a very strong image. This photograph was taken at the 1992 National Arts Festival at Grahamstown. The image is enhanced by the presence of very brilliant red spot lighting. The contrast between the brilliant red lighted area and the rest of the dark, almost black stage, helps the viewer to focus on the dancer. The dancer's gesture, as well as the gesture by his shadow, depicts the tension and the mood of his dance.

In this case the film used was Fuji with an ASA rating of 1600 - developed by the normal C41 process. This shot was taken at a shutter speed of 1/60th of a second and a f-stop of 4.5. A tripod was used for support. Perhaps the use of an even slower shutter speed (and accordingly some movement) would have resembled the mood more accurately.

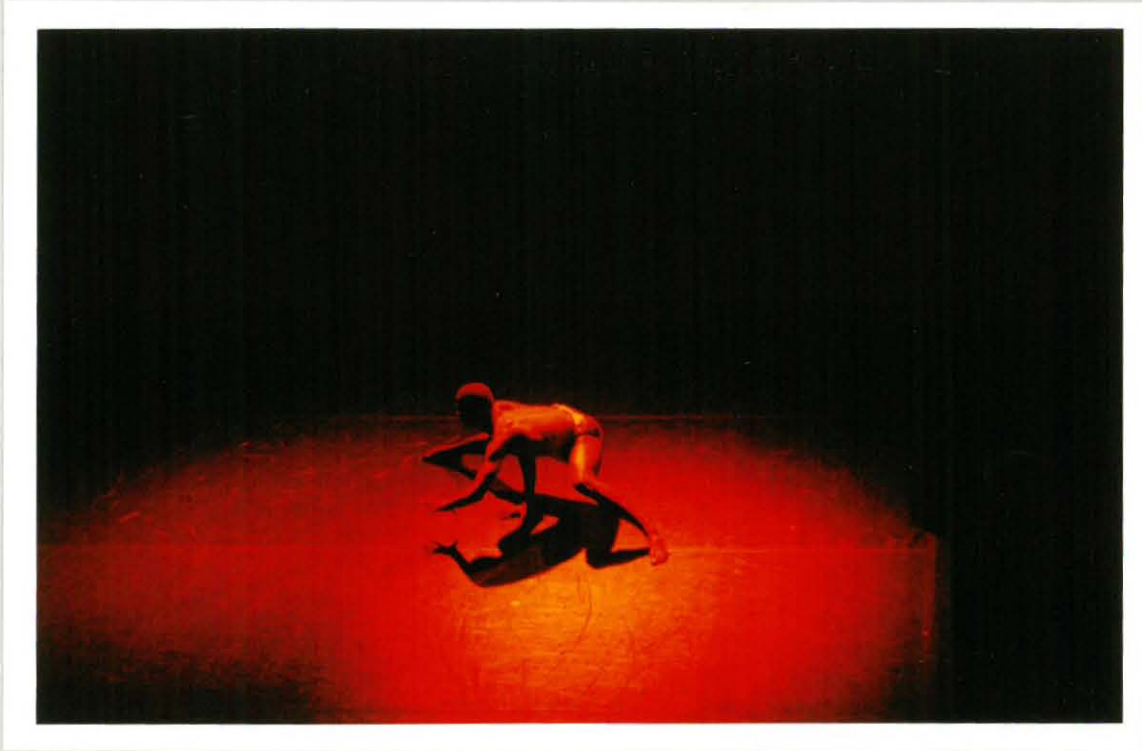


Figure 2
Untitled 2
1/60th second
f/4.5
Fujicolor 1600

9.3 Untitled 3

This shot was taken during an opera performance at the Civic Theatre in Bloemfontein. It portrays a serious and dramatic moment in the opera. The drama in the photograph is enhanced by the presence of excessive grain which is a direct result of the type of film used. An Ilford 400 ASA film was uprated to 3200 ASA and processed in Microphen developer (stock solution) for 16 minutes at 21°.



Figure 3
Untitled 3
1/60th second
f/4.5
Ilford 400 ASA

9.4 Untitled 4

Very exiting images can be obtained by using a slower shutter speed in order to get movement in the photograph. In this case the camera was moved – it was thus used without any support.

The shot was taken at a shutter speed of 1/8th of a second with a f-stop of 5.6.

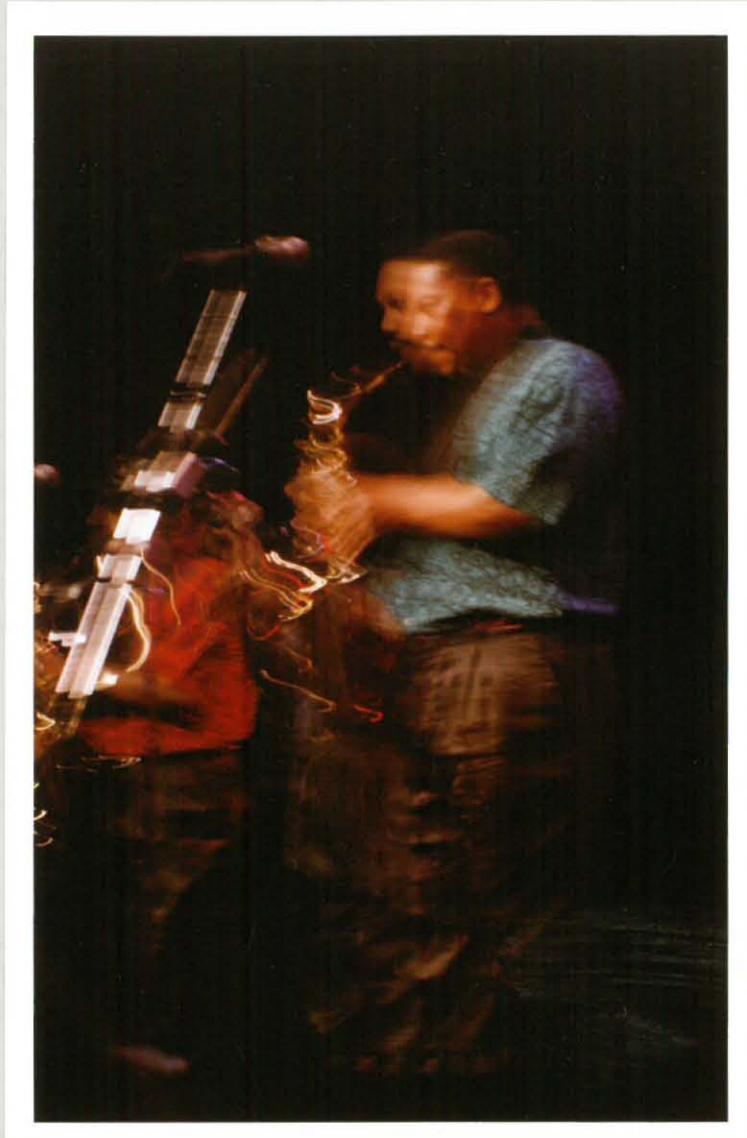


Figure 4
Untitled 4
1/8th second
f/5.6
Agfacolor 800

9.5 Untitled 5

This photograph, taken during a performance at the National Arts Festival, renders the exact emotion conveyed through the dance - the conflict and danger women in modern society have to cope with. The effect is enhanced by the use of soft even stage lighting.

In terms of composition it is well structured. The movement in the photograph starts at the male dancer, it moves towards the women and one gets the impression that all of them will be moving towards the large open space to the left of the picture.

The use of a f-stop of 5.6 caused that all the people is in focus. By using Fuji 1600 ASA film, the photographer was enabled to shoot at a shutter speed of 1/125th second.



Figure 5
Untitled 5
1/125th second
f/5.6
Fujicolor 1600

9.6 Untitled 6

A split second image was obtained by literally pointing the camera for several minutes at the artist and waiting for the right moment to take the photograph. The facial expression of the artist is very striking. Here again, as in the previous black and white photograph, the presence of excessive grain enhances the quality of the picture. The type of film used and the method of processing, are the same as those in the previous black and white photograph.



Figure 6
Untitled 6
1/60th second
f/4.5
Ilford 400 ASA

9.7 Untitled 7

The impression of this photograph creates the impression that it was recorded in a small intimate venue, almost cabaret-type. This idea is obtained through the very near photographing point, the presence of members of the audience in the picture as well as the type of lighting used.

The type of lighting used for the show, caused the whole picture to have an cyan color cast.

Here a f-stop of 2.8 and a shutter speed of 1/4th second was used. The slow shutter speed enabled the recording of the artist's arm as movement - simultaneously conveyeing the mood of the song he was singing.



Figure 7
Untitled 7
1/4th second
f/2.8
Fujicolor 1600

9.8 Untitled 8

The combination of static and moving figures in this photograph provides a situation of contrast. The moving figures, entering from the right of the stage, leads the eye of the viewer to the static figures with their music instruments.

The mixture of different colors of light in this picture is very striking. The film used, Fujicolor 1600, rendered the color quality very well. It would not have had the same effect if the photograph was taken on black and white film.

Taken at a shutter speed of 1/15th second, there is not too much movement which would have made the dancers unidentifiable. With a f-stop of 8 all the dancers are in focus.



Figure 8
Untitled 8
1/15th second
f/8
Fujicolor 1600

9.9 Untitled 9

Unlike the previous photograph, this one has not got as much movement, although a trace of blurring is present. The near viewpoint almost (with the saxophone quite large) gives a wide-angle effect. The lesser the movement, the more identifiable the object is. In this case, the camera was held steady and the artist moved. The saxophone is more out of focus than the artist's body because the saxophone was moved more.

The photograph has an overall blue-cyan feeling, but the reflection of colored spotlights in the saxophone provides an interesting focal point.

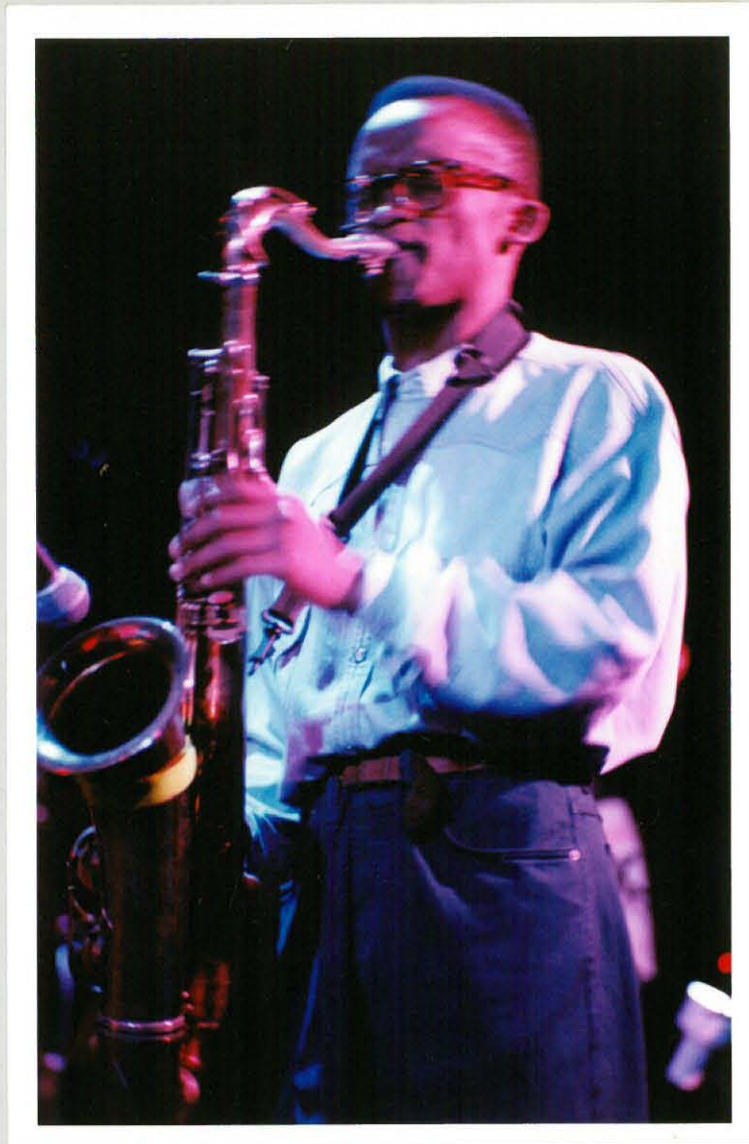


Figure 9
Untitled 9
1/60th second
f/4.5
Fujicolor 1600

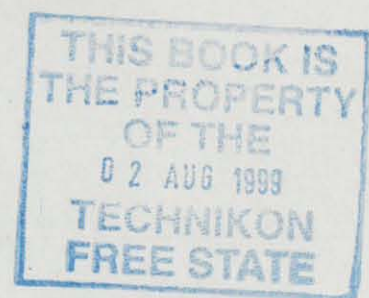
9.10 Untitled 10

Ballet as a definite type of visual art is also included in the performing arts. A very fine edge separates ballet from dance. Although ballet is a form of dance, it exists independently of dancing.

Motion in ballet (as well as in dancing) can be revealed artistically with the aid of blurred images. To obtain an blurred image like this one, a slow shutter speed (1/60 second or slower) has to be used. The slower the shutter speed, the more movement will be captured - depending on the speed of the action.



Figure 10
Untitled 10
1/60th second
f/4.5
Fiford 400 ASA



9.11 Untitled 11

This image was taken during a cabaret performance at the Grahamstown Art Festival. The very limited area of illumination, as well as the direction of illumination, creates a very intimate feeling with respect to the performer.

The use of a zoom lens enabled the photographer to capture the tension and the concentration on the singer's face - perhaps revealing the mood of the performance.

The use of a relatively new film from Kodak, T-Max rated at 3200 ASA, provided excessive grain. The effect of grain was enhanced by the relative harsh available lighting in the make-up room. The film was exposed at an ASA rating of 3200 (it can be rated up to 6400 ASA) and developed in ID-11 developer (10 minutes at 25°).



Figure 11
Untitled 11
1/60th second
f/2.8
Kodak T-Max 3200



55



Figures 12
Untitled 12
1/60th second
f/4.5
Kodak T-Max 3200



Figures 12
Untitled 12
1/60th second
f/4.5
Kodak T-Max 3200

10. Conclusion

The field of live performance photography offers almost indefinite opportunities to photographers. The photographer's success is only going to be determined by his ability to meet demands. It is the task of the photographer to extend his range, to offer something extraordinary and to portray a performance in a unique way. Therefor, by being creative, shooting from different angles (even including interiors) and by experimenting with materials, the photographer will survive in a demanding world.

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